



2008 Christmas Bird Count

Coordinated by Brian O'Toole & Gary Palmer

The annual Greenwich-Stamford Christmas Bird Count held on December 14th tallied 119 species and 29,475 individual birds. Highlights included high numbers of American Wigeon, Bufflehead, Red-tailed Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Common Raven, Chipping Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird and Common Grackle.

Other good finds were three Northern Gannets, Great Egret, three Bald Eagles, Northern Goshawk, Lesser Black-backed Gull, House Wren, Baltimore Oriole, White-Winged Crossbill and Common Redpolls. A low count of Ring-necked Ducks was recorded and significant count day misses included Brown-headed Cowbird and Greater Scaup.

A Yellow-throated Warbler was a new bird for this count circle. Normally found in the southeast, this is a rare visitor, especially in the winter. This individual bird showed up at a backyard feeding station in Riverside around December 9th and stayed throughout February to enjoy a steady diet of peanuts, suet, mealworms and waxworms.

Yellow-throated Warbler



Photo by Meredith Sampson from Wild Wings

In addition to the Yellow-throated Warbler, four other warbler species were counted including Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped, Palm and Yellow-Breasted Chat. Another notable was a Clay-colored Sparrow in Putnam Cemetery in Greenwich. This was the second time this species was recorded in our count circle.

Audubon Greenwich and the Quaker Ridge Bird Club extend our sincere thanks to the 82 dedicated field observers and 13 feeder watchers for their efforts. And many thanks to our staff and volunteers for the wonderful food at the compilation meeting that followed the count day.

To get involved in citizen science efforts throughout the year, contact Brian O'Toole or Ted Gilman.

SATURDAY MAY 9

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY AND Annual Bird Breakfast



Saw Whet Owl by David Sibley

Enjoy Audubon's traditional early morning birding and breakfast. Then join us for a special lecture on conservation biology and connections between coffee plantations and songbirds. Later in the day, meet world renowned author and natural history illustrator David Sibley.

- **6:30-8:00 am:** Morning Bird Walk
- **8:00-9:00 am:** Birder's Breakfast*
- **9:30-10:30 am:** 'Voices for the Birds' by Bridget Stutchbury
- **5:30-7:30 pm:** Meet David Sibley – Bird Artist Extraordinaire



David Sibley

* RSVP for breakfast. \$8 per person. Call to sign up at x221. FOR LECTURES: Call Jeff at x239 for details and to RSVP.



Love nature? Want to teach others?

Be a "Teacher Naturalist" at Audubon Greenwich

Throughout the year, school and scout groups come to study nature and science while hiking Audubon trails.



Ted Gilman demonstrates the proper use of a magnifying glass to students on the Audubon trails.

Will their next trail guide be you?
If you want to share your knowledge of nature with young people, then be a naturalist with us!

In-depth training sessions:

March 17, 18, 24, 25

Then, 'shadow' classes to learn more.

Sign up with Lindsey at 203-869-5272 x235.



Ruth Newberg visits the observation bee hive with students learning about the lives of insects.

Voices for the Birds Tour April 16 & May 9, 2009

Sponsored by Birds & Beans Coffee



Audubon Greenwich is pleased to host two great lectures by outstanding scientists for a coffee-fueled lecture tour sponsored by Birds & Beans Coffee – a 100% organic shade grown coffee company. The Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center (SMBC) has developed strict scientific certification standards that are organic, shade grown, sustainable and environmentally friendly. Many of our most loved birds in the northeast such as the wood thrush and scarlet tanager depend on environments such as those provided by 'Rustic Canopy' coffee farming for sustaining their populations. Birds&Beans™ coffee has partnered with the SMBC 'Bird Friendly'® certification and aims to become the gold standard for sustainable coffee.

Scott Weidensaul April 16 at 7:30 pm

This renowned naturalist and researcher is author of more than two dozen books on natural history, including the Pulitzer Prize-nominated *Living on the Wind*. He bands hawks each fall and directs a major effort to study the movements of northern saw-whet owls, one of the smallest and least-understood raptors in North America. Most recently, he has joined a continental effort to understand the rapid evolution, by several species of western hummingbirds, of a new migratory route and wintering range in the East.



Bridget Stutchbury May 9 at 9:30 am

Bridget Stutchbury will join Audubon's morning birding and Annual Birders' Breakfast and present a special lecture after the meal. She is author of *Silence of the Songbirds*, and an advocate for conservation that has led to her being called the Rachel Carson of the 21st Century. She is a professor and Canada Research Chair in Ecology and Conservation Biology at York University, Toronto. Since the 1980s, she has followed songbirds to their wintering grounds in Latin America and back to their breeding grounds in North America to understand their behavior, ecology and conservation.



Space is limited. RSVP to store: 203-869-5272 x221. Suggested donation: \$5/person.
Books by the speakers and coffee from BirdsandBeans.com will be available to purchase.

EARTH DAY

A Sense of Wonder

A film inspired by
the life of Rachel Carson

April 22, 2009 • 8:00-9:00 pm

Audubon Greenwich is pleased to screen *A Sense of Wonder* on Earth Day evening. Shot in September 2007 at Rachel Carson's cottage on the coast of Maine, the film is based on the play *A Sense of Wonder* written by Kaiulani Lee. Using many of Miss Carson's own words, Kaiulani Lee embodies this extraordinary woman in a documentary style film, which depicts Carson in the final year of her life.

Rachel Carson – An Environmental Inspiration

Rachel Carson, born in 1907, has been called the “patron saint” of the modern environmental movement. As a scientist, a writer, and a woman, Rachel Carson has inspired generations. As an activist she fought governmental negligence and unbridled corporate interest.



**Rachel Carson's
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
employee photo**

In 1962, Carson delivered her seminal work, *Silent Spring*, which alerted the world to the dangers of chemical pesticides and launched our modern environmental movement. Controversy swirled around the book as the chemical industry tried to suppress publication with a lawsuit. Even though Carson had her science belittled by those who felt their interests threatened, *Silent Spring* stayed on the bestsellers list for 86 weeks and was translated into over 30 languages.

In 1963, Miss Carson testified before Congress, speaking out in an effort to protect human health and the environment from the cascade of poisons unleashed by the chemical industry. Less than a year later, on April 14th, 1964, Carson died of breast cancer. But the legacy of Rachel Carson lives on.

She was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor the U.S. government can award a civilian. Her determined labors led directly to the passage of such important laws as the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act. These laws remain the pillars of U.S. environmental law. Praising Carson and her work, Al Gore wrote that, “without [*Silent Spring*], the environmental movement might have been long delayed or never developed at all.”

KIERNAN NATURE ART GALLERY

Parrots of the Caribbean: Bonaire's Tropical Treasure

Photographs by Kim Hubbard, Photo Editor for Audubon Magazine

Photos on display in March & April 2009

Earth Day Reception: Wednesday, April 22 • 6:00-8:00 pm

Followed by the movie 'A Sense of Wonder'

The Yellow-shouldered Amazon parrot is highly endangered by the illegal pet trade. The species' extremely limited range includes the tiny Dutch island of Bonaire.



An island boasting 214 species of birds, including an important population of breeding flamingos, Bonaire is an undiscovered treasure for birders. Last August, *Audubon Magazine's* very own Kim Hubbard set off on a trip to Bonaire in search of the many birds that visit and make this tiny Caribbean paradise home.

One of the most endangered species caught by Kim's lens was the Yellow-shouldered Amazon parrot. In hopes of saving this bird, a pair of young British scientists have been working with Bonaire environmental groups and former poachers to gather much needed data on what is believed to be the parrot's most protectable population.

“Bonaire gets an unusual confluence of birds from northern South America, the Caribbean, and North America. There is this wonderful possibility of finding anything. You can sit at the watering holes and see thousands of birds.”

Jeff Wells, of the Boreal Songbird Initiative.



**A sneak preview of photos to be used in
a future issue of Audubon magazine.**

AUDUBON GREENWICH NATURE PROGRAM CALENDAR

S P R I N G 2 0 0 9

Saturday, March 7

Mead Lake Hike 2:00-3:45 pm

Explore the shores of Mead Lake for animal tracks & learn the history of the lake on this guided walk. Age 7 & up. RSVP to Store: x221.

Saturday, March 14

E4C Family Breakfast: Live Animal Show 9:00-10:30 am

Come for a light, healthy breakfast and enjoy a live animal show with Jungle Jim from Parry Safari. \$25 per family. RSVP required. RSVP to Jeff: x239.

Saturday, March 14

Woodcock Watch 6:45-7:30 pm

Watch and listen for the crepuscular calls and aerial performances of these sandpiper relatives. A brief indoor program followed by outdoor observation. Dress warmly for quiet standing to watch. Ages 8 & up. RSVP to Store: x221.



Woodcock

Saturday, March 21

Naturalist Workshop: Birding Basics 9:30 am-noon

An introduction to the tools & skills used in bird study, followed by a bird ID walk. Learn how to use binoculars, field guides, audio-visual materials, and other resources that make birding so much fun. For adults and teens. Registration required. \$12/adult. No charge for teens. RSVP to Ted: x230.

Sunday, March 22

'Pura Vida': Ted's Costa Rican Eco-Adventure 2:00-3:00 pm

Audubon's own Ted Gilman shares stories and photos from his trip to Costa Rica in 2008. Ted will highlight tropical plants, insects, birds, snakes, monkey's, volcanoes, and the dedicated scientists & educators who are working to preserve the rich natural heritage of Costa Rica. No charge. RSVP to Store: x221.



Ted Gilman and Raia Morales investigating river

Tuesday, March 24

GREEN HOMES SERIES: Indoor Environmental Quality Registration: 8:30 am/ Show: 9:00-11:30 am

Learn how to improve the quality of the air in your home. Take steps to energy independence by implementing efficiency, conservation, and clean energy strategies at home. Suggested admission: \$10. RSVP to Liz: x229.

Sunday, March 29

Hike: Signs of Spring Detective 2:00-3:30 pm

Come help us search for red-winged blackbirds, pussy willows, colorful tree buds, early emerging insects, and much more. All ages. RSVP to Store: x221.

Sunday, March 29

Maine's Puffin Colony with "Puffin Pete" Salmansohn 3:30 pm

Join Pete for fun times and a short award-winning film, Project Puffin, that brings viewers to the wild Maine islands where puffin restoration work is taking place. All ages welcome. RSVP to Store: x221.



Puffins

SPRING BIRD WALKS

Rise and shine for this annual tradition. No fee or RSVP required. Bring binoculars. Some loaner binoculars may be available.

WEDNESDAY MORNINGS

7:00-8:30 am at Fairchild Garden

April 8, 15, 22, 29 / May 6, 13, 20, 27

Meet in parking area on North Porchuck Road.

SATURDAY MORNINGS

7:00-8:45 am at Audubon Greenwich

April 4, 11, 18, 25 / May 2, 16, 23, 30

Meet in main parking area on Riversville Road.

Wednesday, April 22

A Sense of Wonder –

A film inspired by the life of Rachel Carson

Art Reception 6:00-8:00 pm

Film 8:00-9:00 pm

Audubon Greenwich is pleased to screen *A Sense of Wonder* on Earth Day evening. Shot at Rachel Carson's cottage on the coast of Maine, the film is based on the play *A Sense of Wonder* written by Kaulani Lee. Using many of Miss Carson's own words, this documentary style film, depicts Carson in the final year of her life. Space limited. RSVP to Jeff: x239.



Friday, April 24

Celebrate the Night Sky and Sounds 8:00-9:30 pm

Come learn some basic constellations, listen for night calls of migrating birds, and visit our pond to check for chorusing Spring Peepers. Ages 7 & up. RSVP to Store: x221. (Rain/Cloud Date: April 25)

Saturday, April 25

E4C family Breakfast: Meet a live bat! 9:00-10:30 am

Enjoy a light, healthy breakfast with a special bat presentation by Gerni Griswold – a veteran bat presenter. This child-friendly show will touch on bat basics and feature a live ambassador from the bat world. \$25 per family. RSVP required. RSVP to Jeff: x239.

Saturday, April 25

Naturalist Workshop: Neotropical Migrants 9:30am-noon

Learn about wood warblers and other neotropical migrants. Introductory talk and field walk to learn characteristics, adaptations, and behaviors plus ID tips & study resources. For adults and teens. Registration required. \$12 adults. No charge for teens. RSVP to Ted: x230.

Saturday, April 25

Spring Wildflower Walk 2:00-3:30 pm

Come walk with us to seek out our early spring wildflowers and learn about their life histories, ecological niches and insect pollination partners. Ages 5 & up. RSVP to Store: x221.

Saturday, May 2

Naturalist Workshop: Birding By Ear 9:30 am-noon

Indoor discussion of how and why birds vocalize; introduction to useful bird sound recordings, and outdoor walk to practice Birding By Ear skills. For adults & teens. Registration required. \$12 adults. No charge for teens. RSVP to Ted: x230.

Saturday, May 2

Family Pond Exploration 2:00-3:30 pm

Bring the family to discover an amazing variety of insects, amphibians and other organisms which call Indian Spring Pond home. All ages. RSVP to Store: x221.

Friday, May 8

Full Moon Walk 8:00- 9:30 pm

Come enjoy the spring moonlight while we listen for migrating neotropical songbirds overhead and the choruses of frogs at the pond and other wildlife. RSVP to Ted: x230.

International Migratory Bird Day

Saturday, May 9

Birding & Breakfast with Bridget Stutchbury 6:30-8:00 am Birding

8:00-9:00 am Birders Breakfast*

9:30-10:30 am 'Voices for the Birds' by Bridget Stutchbury
Enjoy Audubon's tradition of early morning birding and breakfast in the barn. Bridget Stutchbury is author of the book, 'Silence of the Songbirds,' an advocacy for conservation which has led to her being called the Rachel Carson of the 21st Century. Lecture: \$5 suggested donation. *Breakfast: \$8/person - RSVP required. RSVP to Store: x221.

Meet David Sibley - Bird Artist Extraordinaire 5:30-7:30 pm

First there was Peterson – then there was Sibley. Join Audubon for a memorable lecture and reception with David Sibley, renowned author of several bird identification guides, including the Sibley Guide to Birds. \$20 per person includes refreshments and snacks. Sibley books available in store. RSVP required. RSVP to Jeff: x239.



Saturday, May 30

Naturalist Workshop: Insects and other Arthropods 9:30 am-noon

Overview of anatomy, taxonomy, natural history, and useful resources. Class will combine introductory talk and outdoor walk. For adults and teens. Registration required. \$12 adults. No charge for teens. RSVP to Ted: x230.

Saturday, May 30

Insects and Their Relatives in Our Back Yards 2:00-3:30 pm

Join us for this family program to meet some of the amazing insects and other creepy crawlies who live in our yards and learn how we can invite some of these colorful creatures by gardening for insects. All ages. RSVP to Store: x221.

Programs are suitable for all ages unless otherwise indicated. Please register by calling 203-869-5272. Programs start at the Kimberlin Nature Center at Audubon Greenwich, 613 Riversville Road. <http://greenwich.audubon.org>.

Program fees: \$3/adult members; \$5/adult non-members; \$1.50/member children and seniors; \$3/non-member children and seniors; no charge to Teacher Naturalists as part of their ongoing training.

STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH AUDUBON PROGRAMS! Send a blank email to: AudubonGreenwichNews-subscribe@yahoo.com for weekly program reminders.

Raptor Recollections

By Brian Bielfelt

Each year, when asked to describe the hawk season, I contemplate how to depict the remarkable sights, sounds, and experiences of being at one of the best hawk watches on the East Coast. Reading or hearing about it doesn't do justice to sharing experiences with a crew of dedicated volunteers while watching large numbers of migrating raptors.

For those who were unable to participate in our 38th year of hawk watching, you missed seeing 13,000 Broad-winged Hawks fly through in less than five hours on September 18th. We were counting swirling kettles of Broad-winged Hawks against a blue sky, with two kettles containing over 1000 hawks and many more in the hundreds. At one point, the hawks were literally flying everywhere. It was absolutely crazy trying to count all these hawks and our volunteers hawk watchers saved the day. Mike Warner and Marty Barris were counting hundred hawk kettles over the tree tops in the distant south, Mike Reese and Frank Guida were counting two streams of hawks directly overhead, Benjamin Van Doren and I were in a scope counting hundred hawk kettles in the very distant north. Meanwhile, Stefan Martin, Ryan McLean, and Pete Gustus kept spotting new kettles. This is the fifth best single day for migrating raptors at Quaker Ridge, though this is much less than the 32,595 seen here on September 15, 1995.

This was the highlight of the season, but there are other great experiences this year. On the morning of September 19th, Ryan McLean spotted an immature dark morph Swainson's Hawk, a rarity any time of the year, but very rare in September (and dark-morphs are less common than light-morphs) in the East. We were ahead of the single day record for Cooper's Hawks by mid-day on October 6th and ended the day with 88, 20 more than the previous record set last year. November 2nd brought us a record day for Red-shouldered Hawks (91), shattering the previous record by nearly 30 birds. This year also



Quaker Ridge had 442 more raptors than any other East Coast hawk watch this season.

had a large passage of Turkey Vultures with a record day of 192 and a record year of 1,178.

One of the greatest experiences at Quaker Ridge hawk watch is watching eagles, both Bald and Golden, migrate. This year we counted 155 Bald Eagles and 14 Golden Eagles. It is always exciting to see Bald Eagles, but it is even more exciting when two are chasing each other 50 feet overhead. If you spend a day out at the hawk watch in September, you are almost guaranteed to see a Bald Eagle. Golden Eagles

are a well-deserved reward for sitting outside on a cold day during the last week of October and the first week of November. A day with one is good, but we saw six on October 30th. A late day Golden Eagle is always spectacular with the sun shining on the back of their golden head and neck. This year, we had one late day eagle moving away from the coast and looking for a place to land. The hawk watchers and Audubon staff were able to watch it for 20 minutes as it slowly made its way inland.

This marks our second season working in conjunction with Bedford Audubon and Chestnut Ridge hawk watch. By working with them, we hope to better understand hawk migration around Long Island Sound. Historically, Chestnut Ridge gets more Red-tailed Hawks, Quaker Ridge more Broad-winged Hawks, and the coast more Sharp-shinned Hawks. Even though we have yet to establish a hawk watch on the coast, by working with Chestnut Ridge we hope to better understand the different concentrations of hawks at different distances from the coast.

Anyone can hawk watch and anyone can volunteer. You don't need to be able to identify the hawks or know anything about birds. We need eyes watching the skies. Some of our best spotters know very little about identification, but come out to learn. Come out next year, ask questions, talk with our volunteers, and enjoy sitting on the hawk watch lawn counting eagles, hawks, and falcons.

Be a part of the Quaker Ridge Hawk Watch team any day of the week. To volunteer, call Brian at 203-869-5272 x221.

Capitol View: It's All About Money!

By Sandy Breslin, Director of Government Affairs, Audubon Connecticut

This year, federal and state lawmakers are urgently focused on creating jobs and filling budget gaps. Audubon Connecticut is working hard to make sure that wildlife and habitat issues get their fair share of attention during this process. Right after the November elections, we teamed up with Audubon's National Policy Office in D.C. and our partners at Audubon New York to advocate for funding for clean water infrastructure and habitat restoration projects around Long Island Sound. The projects recommended will create jobs (CT DEP estimates one job for every \$50,000-\$100,000 investment) and help to improve the health of the Sound. View the list of proposed projects at <http://www.audubonct.org>.

So far, the response from lawmakers has been positive and we are hopeful that Connecticut will receive its share of support through the Stimulus Package that is now working its way through Congress.

At the state level, growing budget deficits in FY09-FY11 threaten to derail funding for key conservation programs. Under consideration are a wide range of cost-saving measures, including a range of fee increases and the potential elimination of certain programs and agencies, such as the Council on Environmental Quality.

The General Assembly is just beginning its budget process and Audubon will be in Hartford advocating for our conservation priorities. Stay tuned for updates!

Get up-to-date information on environmental issues affecting birds, other wildlife, and their habitats, and let your voice be heard! Join Audubon's Advocacy Network: AudubonActCT-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Contact Sandy Breslin at sbreslin@audubon.org or (203) 264-5098 x307 for details.



Great egret hunting in the salt marshes at Greenwich Point Park

Annual Bird-A-Thon

All Day on May 16

Make a pledge towards each species found by Audubon birders and you will support conservation in our area.

Call Brian at x221 for a pledge form or to join the birding efforts for the day.

Nature Store News

New Store Hours:

Tuesday-Sunday from 9 am-5 pm

New Items in Stock

- Woodpecker T-Shirts with Audubon Greenwich logo
- Spiral Thistle Feeder: attracts more birds
- Owl & Birds of Prey identification posters
- The Birdie Bell: an all-weather holder for seed bells, fruit and nesting material
- The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State

For the youngsters

- Beginning Birders Kits: Binoculars (8x21), ID guide & carrying case for only \$50.
- Magnifiers, puppets, Dr. Seuss books, plush birds, bird ID cards, 'Birdopoly' games, & more!

**10% discount on all
Swarovski binoculars**
(Valid until May 31st)

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SPRING 2009

Natural History Notes

By Ted Gilman, Education Specialist

Tree buds and twigs gradually coloring up with reds, pinks, greens, and yellows and sap rising from the roots, as winter slowly releases its grip on the landscape; flocks of calling red-winged blackbirds and common grackles braving the chilly winds of early spring to head back to their ancestral breeding grounds; the first faint calls of a spring peeper, from beneath a tent of fallen leaves, announcing another springtime chorus; delicate fairy shrimp, swimming on their backs, plying the waters of our vernal ponds with their ghostly, rippling waves of beating legs; the warbling, gurgling, and twittering calls of returning tree swallows swooping over the front field; the thrill of spotting a bluebird perched for the first time on a newly-erected nestbox; the subtle brown and orange colors of a tortoiseshell butterfly's wings spread in the sunshine on a woodland trail, rock, or fallen tree; ospreys arriving back at their nesting platform to continue the successful recovery of this spectacular fish-hunter along our Long Island shorelines; blueback herring surging up the Mianus River fishway in Cos Cob answering the timeless call to return to their place of birth to spawn and continue their species; fuzzy young great horned owls venturing out of their nest onto nearby branches for the



first time as the sugar maples begin to leaf out; the south wind carrying the voices of a multi-toned chorus of American toads on a warm April evening; the slow, stately flapping and graceful soaring of great blue herons heading north over Quaker Ridge in mid-April; the deep snoring calls of pickerel frogs along the shores of Mead lake as the delicate white blooms of shadbush glow overhead; the first rich trill of a pine warbler announcing the beginning of the annual parade of warbler migrants, to be followed by the rush of color, song, and feeding activity of late April and May; queen yellow jackets and bald-faced hornets, emerging from hibernation to begin yet another new colony, creating small, lemon-sized paper nests to raise their first brood of daughter workers; the special thrill one gets on hearing the first spring songs of a wood thrush mixed with the reminder of the amazing, death-defying flight it has made from Costa Rica, or other southern wintering habitats; the wow reaction of a new birder having their first-time look at a scarlet tanager or Blackburnian warbler; the peaceful beauty of a brand new fawn, quietly trusting its spotted coat to conceal it among the sun-speckled leaves of a forest floor...

Audubon Connecticut's Annual Awards Dinner Celebrating Conservation Leadership Thursday, May 14, 2009



We hope you will join us at the Belle Haven Club in Greenwich and support this year's event when Audubon honors Congressman Chris Shays for his strong commitment to protecting the nation's environment. This annual event provides core support for many of our most important conservation work, most notably Audubon's Long Island Sound science, legislative, and conservation programs.

Event Co-Chairs: Jeanine Getz & Anne Ogilvy

For tickets, please contact Audubon Connecticut's Director of Development
John Hannan: 203-869-5272 ext. 234.

 **Audubon** GREENWICH
613 Riversville Road
Greenwich, CT 06831

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SAVE THE DATES

Pete Salmansohn: March 29

Rachel Carson Movie: April 22

David Sibley: May 9